

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE HUB OF THE COMMUNITY

West Rutland Town Hall

By Victor and Ethel Seigny



In the late eighteenth century and, likewise, the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, the horse had its heyday. To go from here to there took time, much of it, especially as compared to today's modes of travel. One big inevitable result: the populace remained at home to do shopping in local stores; card parties, husking bees and social gatherings were held in neighboring homes, and the whole town converged on the Town Hall for special events, such as special or annual town meetings.

On town meeting day families gathered together and made a social event of the occasion. Women displayed their good cooking, shared recipes and told each other the interesting news of the day. The men attended to the current business and political problems. It was not all business, however. John Barleycorn was often present to make the day more pleasant for some and a nuisance problem to the moderator or those in charge of the meeting. Final results were usually beneficial to the community and a step forward in its progress.

Town Meetings Prior to 1887

The annual town meetings were held every March from 1774 to 1799 in the old meeting house in Center Rutland opposite the Evergreen Cemetery. In 1799 the legal voters of the Town of Rutland voted to hold town and freemen's meetings in alternate years in the East Parish¹ Courthouse and the West Parish² Meeting House. A town hall was built in the West Parish. This hall was erected on lower Pleasant Street across and north of the old Pleasant Street Cemetery. Following its erection the town meetings were held there every other year.

As the population grew in Rutland, however, the town hall in the West Parish became too small, even though it had a seating capacity of 600. At this point all town meetings were held in the Village of Rutland. Transportation was provided by railroad for all voters to get to the East Rutland town hall.

In the *Rutland Herald* of April 30, 1875, it was reported that the "Ex-Town Hall (in West Rutland) is being arranged for theatricals," and on May 10 that "The old town hall is now a new opera home." For several years after 1875 it was used for plays and entertainments. In 1887 it was appraised by the commissioners at \$800.

In Article 15 at the 1913 Town Meeting, the question was whether the Town would vote to sell the old Town Hall. It was so voted and sold to Thomas Dwyer for \$200. He used a part of it to build a house just west of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (French Church) on Main Street.

After the Town of West Rutland was organized by Act of the Legislature on November 19, 1886, Campbell's Hall (also known as Campbell's Rink, or Campbell's Opera House) was used as the setting for West Rutland's first Town Meeting in March of 1887 as a separate town. It continued to be the Town Meeting place until 1909, when the present Town Hall was ready for use.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, Charles Campbell, a businessman and property owner in the West Parish, operated an indoor roller skating rink on Marble Street behind an ice cream parlor known for some time as Dernier and LaBelle's and now known as Terry's Corner.

Roller skating was a popular form of entertainment for the young people of the area. In 1886 the skating rink was remodeled, the upper story being transformed into a hall and the lower story had stores in the front, while a hall for theatricals was outfitted in the back of the building. The upper floor hall was named "Society", whereas the hall downstairs was called the village hall.

After the Town of West Rutland was organized, Campbell's Rink was the center for political caucuses, town meetings and other gatherings from 1887 until the present town hall was built in 1908-1909.

1886

This was the year in which West Rutland became a separate entity, a town by itself. It was no longer the "West Parish", as it had been called for nearly 100 years. The state legislature granted its charter on November 19, 1886.

There still remained the problem of town organization, the election of town officers and the business to be conducted for the future welfare of the Town. The following steps were taken by the organizers:

FREEMAN'S MEETING³

March 1st A.D. 1887

NOTICE

We the undersigned freeman of the Town of West Rutland request the following Town Officers be elected (sic) to Serve for the Year ensuing and with the exception of Moderator that they be elected by ballot on one strip of paper. One Moderator Town Clerk Town

¹West Parish now known as West Rutland.

²East Parish now known as Proctor, Rutland City and Town of Rutland.

³*Original spelling and punctuation have been maintained in all excerpts from town records.*

Treasurer five Selectmen and overseer of Poor Three Grand Jurors
 Three Listers One constable & Collector of Taxes one Second constable
 one Sealer of Weights and Measures Trustee of Public Money Three
 Auditors Superintendant of Schools Town Agent Three Fence Viewers
 one Pound Keeper.

James C. Gillespie
 W. R. Dwyer
 J. H. McHaugh
 Rodger Dwyer
 P. F. Gaffney
 Thomas O'Brien
 Thomas Dooley
 Ed Duffy
 Michael Meehen
 Mathew Quinlan
 Timothy O'Neill

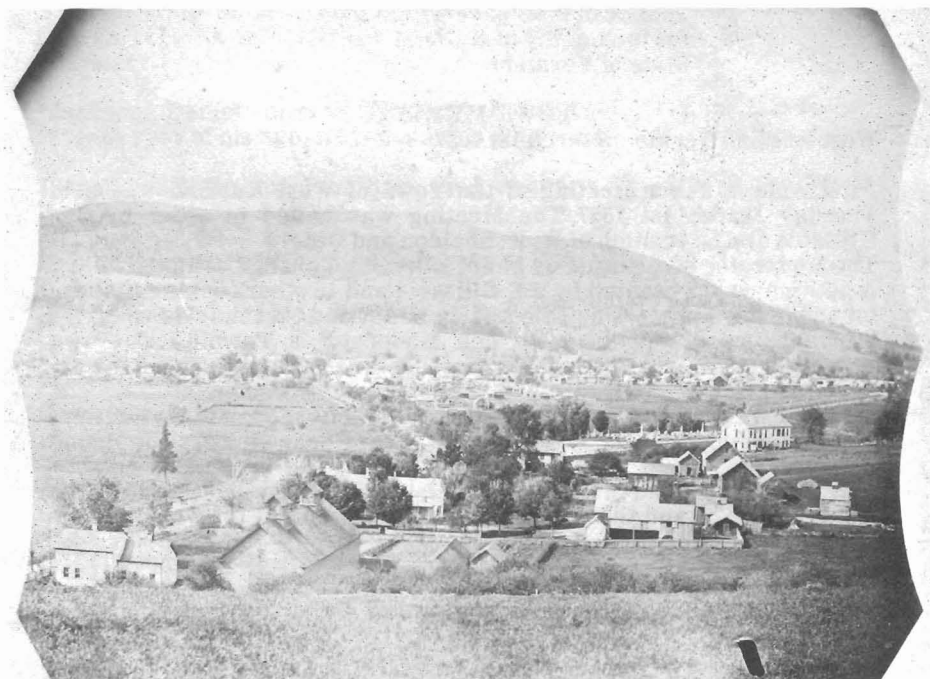
John Cassey
 William Walsh
 James T. Callaham
 James Gardner
 M. R. Burke
 M. D. Everin
 John L. Gallagher
 J. M. Davin
 Dennis J. Lyons
 Ed Thornton

Attest Gahn Gannon Town Clerk

NOTICE March 1st, 1887

FREEMENS MEETING

By virtue of a petition of W. K. Sheldon, John O'Rourke, Wm Walsh, James McHugh, H. H. Brown and James Leamy residents and freeholders of the unorganized town of West Rutland in Rutland County and State of Vermont Said town having been incorporated by act of Legislature A. D. 1886.



From the hill overlooking the Gilmore Farm, one had a good view of the old West Rutland Town Hall opposite the Pleasant Street Cemetery in the nineteenth century. (Victor Sevigny)

The freeman of Said town are hereby Warned to Meet at Campbell's Hall in Said West Rutland on Tuesday the 1st day of March A. D. 1887 at 10 O'clock A.M. Organize Said Town and act upon the following matters to wit:

1. To choose a Moderator to govern Said Meeting
2. To Choose all necessary Town Officers for the year ensuing
3. To vote for County Commissioner
4. To see if the town will vote to raise money by tax or otherwise to pay current expenses of the town and if so at what time the Same and Highway tax will be payable
5. To see if the town will vote to raise money by taxes or otherwise to pay its indebtedness and make provisions for the same
6. To see if the town will exempt the post of firemen from taxation
7. To see if the town will vote to raise money by tax or otherwise to defray expenses incidental to the creation and organization of the town and to purchase such books Safe etc as are necessary to properly carry on affairs of the Town
8. To see if the town will vote any compensation to town officers
9. To see if the town will vote to furnish the H.H. Brown hose company with hose to make their services available in case of fire and if so to make provision for purchasing the same
10. To see if the town will vote to accept the provisions of an Act of the Legislature enacted A.D. 1880 in relation to the Collection of taxes by town treasurer
11. To choose grand and petit Jurors

Rutland Vermont Feb. 16th A.D. 1887

James C. Gillespie

Justice of the Peace within &
for the County of Rutland
State of Vermont

TOWN MEETING

West Rutland Vermont March 1st 1887

First Annual Town Meeting of the Town of West Rutland was held Tuesday March 1st 1887 The Meeting was called to order by Jos Gillespie and on petition of W. K. Sheldon and Others

The Moderator was chosen by ballot Ellecting Tom A. Carmody.

A petition was presented by J C Gillespie and 19 others asking that the following town officers be Ellected by ballot and that they be voted for on One Strip of paper to wit one Moderator a Town Clerk Town Treasurer five Selectmen One Overseer of poor three grand jurors three listers one Constable and Collector one Second Constable one sealer of Weights and measures trustee of public money three auditors Superintendent of Schools Town Agent three Fence viewers one Pound Keeper.

Moved and Seconded that all the articles in the Warning relating to the raising of taxes and the defraying of the expenses of the Town for the ensuing year be dismissed

Motion Carried

Officers Ellected

Moderator

Tom A. Carmody

Town Clerk

John Gannon

Town Treasurer

John Mortrom

5 Selectmen

James Burk

James D. Dernier

Augustie Syer

Joel May

Over seer of poor	Daniel Reed
Grand Jurors	Mathew Quinlan
	Tom A Carmody
	John Gaffney
	Patrick F. O'Neill
	Michael Kennedy
Listors	L. Seguin
	L. T. Barber
Constable and Collector	W. R. Dwyer
Second Constable	Michael Meehan
For Sealer of weight and measures	William Walsh
Trustee of Public Money	T. H. Carmody
For Auditors	P. J. Gilligan
	W. B. Moran
	L. M. Peck
For Town Agent	John Mortrom
For Fence Viewers	John Collins
	Michael Hackett
	M. Kelley
For Pound Keeper	Ed Quinn
For Superintendent of schools	Edward W. McCormick
John Gannon	Town Clerk

The population of the Town, especially that of the school children, began to move toward the center of activities in the region of School District #21 on Main Street, where the present high school and elementary school is located.

This posed an urgent problem of alleviating the crowded conditions in the classrooms. Some classes were held on the stairs.

It was recommended in the Superintendent of Schools' report that either an addition be built to the present high school building, or a new town building with schoolrooms and town offices on the first floor and a hall on the second floor.

This suggestion, as it appears in the Annual Report of 1903, was one of the first to be found which indicated the urgent need of a new town building. Among the articles to be voted upon in 1907, two articles dealt with the building of a new Town Hall. Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to purchase a site for Town Hall and to erect an appropriate public building thereon. Article 12: To vote an appropriation to pay for same. Also Article 18: That the Selectmen and Rev. Carty be authorized to negotiate with any shirt factory in regard to leasing the old Town Hall building — exemption of taxes for 10 years and repair and paint building and insure same for town.

At the March, 1907, Town Meeting Chairman of the Town Hall Committee James E. Burke stated that the Marble Street lots were not desirable and that it was impractical to use the old Town Hall building for the purpose of building a new hall. The Committee recommended a site on lands lying between C. H. Campbell's home residence on the north and the F. A. Morse corner, so-called, on the south. It was then voted that "the same committee, namely, James E. Burke, C. B. Ross and George St. Louis act with the Selectmen and are hereby empowered to purchase a site for a Town Hall and erect a suitable public building thereon for a Town Hall."

The town voted that the Board of Selectmen be authorized to issue town bonds of a sufficient amount to defray the expense of a Town Hall and a site for the same.

In accordance with the vote at the town meeting of March, 1908 to build a Town Hall as per plans submitted by Chas. E. Paige of Rutland, the selectmen with a committee consisting of C. B. Ross, J. E. Burke and George St. Louis, who were appointed to act with them, bought lots at the corner of Marble and Main streets for \$3200.00 and advertised for bids for a Hall. The lowest bid was from C. L. LeBoeuf of Vergennes, which was \$25,453.00.

LeBoeuf's bid was \$3,000.00 below any other. LeBoeuf was awarded the contract and has the building nearly completed. It is probable that

the total cost when finished will not go very much over \$30,000.00. We have issued and sold non-taxable 4 per cent bonds to the amount of \$30,000.00. These begin to become due October 1st, 1931, at the rate of \$2,000.00 each year until all are paid by October 1st, 1935. W. A. Thrall, Geo. C. Robinson, Daniel O'Rourke, Selectmen, West Rutland.

New Town Hall Thrown Open

Rutland Daily Herald

Tuesday morning

February 23, 1909

NEW TOWN HALL THROWN OPEN

Concert and dance is enjoyed by 150 couples at West Rutland

\$30,000.00 building nearing completion

Was begun last May and is a handsome structure containing a good sized auditorium

Now suggested that two additional lots be purchased for a public park.

With an orchestral concert followed by a dance in which 150 couples participated the new Town Hall at West Rutland was informally thrown open for the first time. Music was furnished by Cox's Orchestra. A nominal admission fee was charged to defray expenses.

The building was designed by C. E. Paige of Rutland, a three story one and is not yet entirely completed but, as the day of the opening had been set for a month ago, the final arrangements were made with the contractor C. L. LeBoeuf to have the ceremony last night. The foundation for the Town Hall was begun in May, 1908. The hall was located at the east end of the triangle, bordered by Main and Marble Streets and Campbell Avenue and will cost the Town when completed, including land \$30,000.00. The structure is one hundred feet long and has a frontage of fifty feet. The material used is brick with blue marble trimming and the underpinning is of rock face marble from the foundation to the water table.

All of the marble used in the building is of a blue variety furnished by the Vermont Marble Company. The appearance of the building is enhanced by an artistic marble porch. A roof is supported by two marble columns of one piece each and 13 feet long.

The entrance hall on the first floor is fifteen feet deep, stairs leading from it to the hall above. It contains two lavatories and a ticket office. The first room in the rear to the right to be occupied by the town clerk and town treasurer offices.

It contains a large fire proof safe deposit vault in which the town records will be kept. At the rear of this room is an assembly room to be used for committee meetings, caucuses, and other gatherings, or as a banquet hall. It is 25x30 feet in dimension. Behind this room rear stairs lead outdoors, to the basement and to the hall above.

In the first room to the right are quarters for the town library with shelves for a thousand volumes. At the rear of the library room there is a reading room 25x20 feet. It is separated from the library by an arch, which is supported by covered wood pillars. The last room on this floor is another assembly room 25x20 ft. It probably will be used as an auxiliary to the public school District No. 21 which is outgrowing its building.

On the second floor will be a hall and a stage for entertainment, theatricals, etc.

The auditorium is 60x50 ft. and is 25 feet deep with three dressing rooms. The entrance to the hall is of the same size as the one below. The gallery will seat 120. The main hall will seat about 600 people.

There is a coatroom at the entrance. The building is lighted by electricity furnished by the Rutland Railway Light & Power Company.

The above article printed in the **Rutland Herald** gives a description of the building, a building which was to be of tremendous help in providing space for the elementary school children and high school pupils, and for public uses such as town meetings, social gatherings, library facilities, dances and entertainment.

Further comments were made by the librarian in her library report of 1910, in which she stated, "the New Library rooms in the Town Hall Building are large and well lighted. The book room is fitted with open shelf book stacks and the reading room is furnished with comfortable chairs and tables. The Library is open to the public some part of every day."

School Director's Report 1918

At the high school in the Town Hall, we are quite cramped for room, and we would suggest giving over the entire first floor to school purposes and locating the Library elsewhere. This would eliminate holding classes on the top floor and would help the general standard of the school. It would also eliminate heating the top floor, which would be a big saving in fuel, and at the best it is almost impossible to get this part of the building warm in the very cold weather. Another important saving would be the school seats and furniture as well as the walls of the building itself. Whenever this floor is used for entertainment or dances the school seats have to be piled about the room and as a result many have been broken.

In 1924 the library was moved to the Baptist Church on the corner of Franklin and Ross Streets, freeing the two library rooms for school uses.

Many individuals and organizations took advantage of the facilities offered by the new Town Hall. Some of the organizations were the Marble Valley Grange, the Methodist Society, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Lafayette Guards, St. John's Society, Pomona Grange, Hiram Lodge, Bull Moose, Sodality of St. Monica, Holy Name Society, Episcopal Society, Modern Woodmen of America, Jeanne Nance Council, Le Bon Temps Club, St. Michael Society, License Commissioners, Polish Banks, Masonic Fraternity, Vermont Marble Company, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and various church groups holding bazaars and other forms of entertainment.

The Town Hall provided space on the upper floor for dances throughout the years until a few years ago when it was decided by the selectmen to curtail the use of the second floor for dances or moving pictures. Heat loss in the upper parts of the building created a tremendous expense to the Town for the fuel necessary to keep the space open and comfortable.

Moving pictures or "picture shows" had provided entertainment for the young in spirit from the first year the Hall was built until the space was no longer available. Mr. and Mrs. Newman Robinson were the last operators to hold regular shows in the Town Hall — in the years 1945 and 1946.

Political rallies, such as during the Roosevelt era, used the Town Hall as headquarters. These rallies livened activities in the Town and provided good entertainment.

The National Youth Administration (N.Y.A.) used the basement of the Hall as a vocational school in the years 1938-1940. The workshop was equipped with hand tools, table saw and joiner, a circular saw, lathe and scroll saw and a heavy duty electric drill. The equipment was provided by the state N.Y.A.

Forty-eight boys received part-time work and instruction on this job. The money they received, though small in amount, was of considerable help to them and to their families. This period was a part of the "Great Depression". Also, the work done by them in repairing of Town buildings, street repairs, playgrounds and the High School Gymnasium was of great value to the Town.

In general, it was the location for much public enjoyment; for many years it was the location for the education of some elementary and, particularly, the high school students; and it was also where the business of the Town was transacted in the yearly special and annual Town Meetings and in the Town Offices.

In 1920 "Necessary radiators were installed in Town Clerk's office and in room No. 8. A new partition was installed in library room and now makes this room in fair condition for the commercial Course."

In 1922 "Increased attendance in High School, especially in the Commercial Department required an additional class room and additional seating accommodations in assembly. About 60 new chairs were purchased for use in assembly and class rooms."

The new classroom was provided in the dining room in the basement, a folding partition being used in order to preserve the room for use as a dining room in the Town Hall. The passage to the new room was sealed with beaver board to comply with the sanitary requirements.

In 1925 the Fire Marshall gave a report, printed in the Town Report, suggesting that the Town Hall's use by both the public and the schools was no longer compatible and that voters should give thought to the erection of a new school building. Revenue received from public use would not equal the cost of maintenance. Again, the population of school children was on the increase, necessitating more room.

"During the summer of 1929, extensive improvements and repairs have been made on the Town Hall building so that it is now in excellent condition for school and public purposes."

In the year 1931 the Town voted to give the use of the southwest room in the basement of the Town Hall to Post 87 American Legion in recognition of its patriotic purposes and activities.

In the late '70s and now in the '80s some of the voting in town has been held in the Multi-Purpose Room in the Main Street School, this to eliminate climbing the stairs to the second floor of the Town Hall. However, a large room on the first floor of the Town Hall has been used, of late, and has proven large enough for meetings and voting on a local scope.

The Green Mountain Marble Company occupied four rooms in the Hall for their main offices, drafting and estimating departments for 30 years until the company ceased doing business in June, 1969. Three of the rooms were on the first floor and one in the basement.

The Boy Scouts of Troop 16, West Rutland, have had one room in the basement for their use in holding meetings, storing equipment and general needs for troop activities for over 40 years.

In a letter from the Lewes Consulting Engineers, Inc., Williston, Vermont, to Quentin Phelan, Town Manager, West Rutland, Vermont, Mr. Carroll W. Lewes, P.E., gave the following summarized report (letter dated May 16, 1979):

In summary the building is in very good condition considering its age, absence of good maintenance practices and apparently settling soils. With appropriate corrective action and good maintenance practices, the building should have many more years of useful life. Taking off my structural engineer's hat for a moment, I would like to recommend that the exterior of the building be preserved, as it is an attractive and prominent land mark in my opinion.

At the present time, 1983, the main floor is used for the offices of the Selectmen, Town Manager, Town Clerk, Listers, Zoning Board, Auditors, Conferences and Town Meetings. There is also a commercial office, Beaverbrook Homes, Inc. There is still one more large room for another office space.

The basement is still used, one side, mainly, for Boy Scout Troop 16, a troop which has remained active for many years. There are two rest rooms, also.

The upper floor is not used, as it is not energy efficient. What the future holds in store for this room, once used for so many different community activities, is hard to foretell. Many of us recall the school uses, the basketball games, bazaars, moving pictures, political rallies, town meetings and elections, yearly minstrel shows and other entertainments of the moment.

This Town Hall did not have the yearly togetherness of the old Town Hall, when town meetings were held in a spirit of family get-togethers, an all day picnic sort of celebration. And yet, townspeople do meet to solve the problems of the day in a little different atmosphere, living in a world of faster momentum. The automobile

has something to do with this change. However, we do see fellow townsmen we have not seen or talked with, perhaps, for some time. Community spirit at a faster tempo!

About the Authors:

Mr. and Mrs. Victor Sevigny are life-long residents of the West Rutland area. Victor has served as West Rutland town clerk for 43 years and, prior to that, eight years as assistant. Ethel has been assistant clerk for 41 years, since 1942.

THE EPIDEMIC OF 1813

By Dawn D. Hance

The decade spanning the years 1810 to 1820 was particularly trying for the inhabitants of Vermont. An unpopular war with Great Britain, an epidemic which claimed thousands of lives in 1813, monthly frosts causing a massive crop failure in 1816 and a financial crisis in 1818 plagued those hardy souls. Armed only with their faith in God, a strong back and a stout heart, they struggled to survive.

The winter of 1813 brought the most devastating epidemic that Vermont had experienced since the winter of 1794-1795, when an outbreak of pneumonia and canker rash (ulcerous sore throat) caused much sickness. The disease went by the names peripneumony, lung fever or pneumonia typhoides, but was often confused with spotted fever, which was prevalent in Vermont the year before. The symptoms were much the same, with one exception: spotted fever caused inflammation to the head and peripneumony to the lungs.

According to the 1810 census, Vermont was inhabited by 217,913 persons. During the epidemic about 6,400 Vermonters succumbed to the disease. This amounted to about one death for every 35 people. The illness was more fatal to adults than to children. One doctor noted that when one of the heads of a family died frequently the other soon followed.

Rutland County, like others across the state, witnessed the ravages of the disease. Clarendon lost about 80 of its residents, Castleton 60 and Shrewsbury 30. Of course, there are no records indicating the number who survived the onslaught or who were left in a weakened state, only to succumb to some other illness. However, there is evidence that many did survive. For example, Dr. Silas Bowen treated over 400 Reading patients, which totalled one quarter of the town's population. Only 42 deaths resulted.

In early winter the epidemic first struck the soldiers quartered at Burlington, Vermont, and at Plattsburgh and Sackett's Harbor, New York. Due to a debilitating outbreak of measles and the usual deprivations of camp life, the disease raged throughout the camps around Lake Champlain. It is estimated that there were between 2,500 and 2,800 soldiers stationed at Burlington. Nearly 800 of these men died in the epidemic.

Within a month after its first appearance, peripneumony had spread rapidly throughout New England and New York. Generally, it began in December and died out by the end of May with the onset of warm weather. The greatest number of fatalities occurred during March, which was the severest month. In Rutland the disease seemed to have run its course by mid-April.

The symptoms were as follows: chills accompanied by extreme cold in the extremities, pain in the chest and head, rapid respiration and a weak, fast pulse of 80-180 per minute. The tongue was usually white and furry, but in severe cases it turned brown and the eyes protruded. Dr. Bowen noted that either a nose bleed or swelling around the eyes occurring between the third and fifth days always foretold a recovery.

In 1815 Dr. Joseph A. Gallup of Woodstock, who had treated nearly 200 patients and who contracted the illness himself, published his *Sketches of Epidemic Diseases of the State of Vermont*. Much of the book is given to the possible causes and cures of peripneumony. It was concluded that the disease was not contagious

and that the causes existed in the atmosphere. He writes, "The sensible qualities of the atmosphere, especially after the first of January, were not very different from what was experienced two years before, when this same latitude was visited by the epidemic, called spotted fever, of which the present seems to be a sequel, and very similar in many of its symptoms. The winters of both these years were rather remarkable for a series of steady cold, without the thaws usual in this country, and without much rain; with an uncommonly serene sky." He also noted that those who "avoided the cold of winter, fatigue, and the depressing passions of the mind, etc., more generally escaped the disease".

A presentation given before the New York Medical Society and printed in the *Rutland Herald* and Dr. Joseph Gallup's presentation to the Windsor County, Vermont Medical Society generally advocated the same procedures. Their first



Most of the epidemic victims were buried in the North Main Street Cemetery, a burial ground for the East Parish of the Congregational Church from about 1788 to 1817. The church stood just south of the cemetery.

concern was to restore warmth to the extremities and reduce the chills. To accomplish this the patient was placed in a warm bath or wrapped in warm, wet towels. The person was urged to drink freely of herb teas or a mixture of scalded milk, water, elm bark and sugar.

Bloodletting was the treatment often given by physicians, although some disagreed with the practice. The "old-fashioned" doctors were clinging to the usual remedies of opium, calomel and pukes and were against bloodletting. Eighteen ounces was considered a normal bleeding, and some were bled up to seven times to normalize the pulse rate. However, the desired effects were usually accomplished the fourth time.

Tartarized antimony was used to induce vomiting, which relieved the lungs. This was recommended only with application of external warmth, which caused the patient to sweat. Heated bricks, additional blankets, seneca or bloodroot, and steam from a water and herb-filled teapot provided the warmth. This was followed by nutritious food, such as rich broths.

Other remedies included warm infusions of sage, horsemint, penny-royal or saffron. When temperature and thirst were present, nitre and camphor, cream of tartar, soda or magnesia were prescribed. Flaxseed, slippery elm teas, syrup of onions or squills were also administered to the patients.

Sometimes the person would experience a sinking spell accompanied by a low pulse. He was given a teaspoon of a mixture of bark, allspice, loaf sugar and brandy every few minutes.

Little information exists on the epidemic in Rutland. Available records indicate that Dr. Ezekiel Porter, Dr. James Porter, Dr. Jonathan Shaw, Dr. Joel Green, Dr. John Cleveland and Dr. Daniel Reed were attending the sick.

Dr. Ezekiel Porter, whose father, grandfather, great-grandfather and brother were all doctors, was born in 1761 at Northampton, Massachusetts. He served in the Revolutionary War, married Eunice Pomeroy and moved to Rutland prior to 1790. His wife died in 1814, and in 1816 he sold his property in Rutland and removed to Indiana with his three sons. According to the *Rutland Herald*² he died September 23, 1823, at Hindostin, Indiana. Other records say Washington, Floyd County, Indiana.

Dr. James Porter, son of Dr. James and nephew of Dr. Ezekiel was born in 1780. When he was a year old his father died, and he lived part of his minority with his Uncle Ezekiel in Rutland. When he was 17 he travelled to the east coast, where he became a seaman on a cargo ship. Unfortunately, a French privateer captured the ship, and James, along with the rest of the crew, was confined to a French prison. After his release he made his way to Norfolk and on to New York with only a penny in his pocket. From there he proceeded to Rutland where he studied medicine under Dr. Ezekiel Porter. After he was licensed, he remained in practice with his uncle until the epidemic of 1813. At that time he went out on his own and became well-known for his tenacity in fighting the disease. He was also a very skillful surgeon. In 1803 he married Hepsibah Wheelock, and their son, Dr. James B. Porter, also became a noted Rutland physician. Dr. James Porter died at Rutland in 1854 at the age of 74.

Dr. Thomas Hooker, born in 1770 at Northampton, Massachusetts, was living in Rutland by 1795 when he advertised a large assortment of medicine. It is not known that he practiced here, although it is possible, but he and his son did have a store where they sold drugs and groceries on the east side of North Main Street (near the Grand Union). He died in Rutland in 1836.

Dr. Jonathan W. Shaw was born in 1771 and came to Rutland prior to 1810. In 1824 he advertised that his house and seven acres, located a few rods from the West Parish Meeting House³, were for sale. About this time he moved to Clarendon Springs, where he died in 1839.

Dr. Joel Green was born in Westminister, Massachusetts, about 1791. By the age of five he was living at Clarendon and later went to Chittenden. He studied medicine under Dr. Josiah Hale of Brandon and was in Pittsford at the time of the 1810 census. It is said he moved to Rutland in 1816, but there is evidence he treated Rutland citizens in 1813. In 1816 he bought Dr. Ezekiel Porter's home located at the southeast corner of South Main Street and Killington Avenue.⁴ The latter street for many years was known as Green Street. Dr. Joel must have had a green thumb, for in 1835 the *Rutland Herald*⁵ noted that he had raised an English white potato weighing three and a half pounds and measuring 21 inches in circumference. In 1838 he advertised the following for sale: his house and garden, pasture land, his interest in Mason's Hall and a new two-story dwelling house on the west street occupied by Benjamin Fay.⁶ He removed to Castleton where he died in 1849.

Dr. John Cleveland also practiced here during the epidemic. In 1832 he sold his property which was located on the east side of South Main Street between East Washington Street and Killington Avenue.⁷

Dr. Daniel Reed came to Rutland before 1790. According to his obituary, he was a graduate of Yale and practiced medicine in this county for many years. He died in poverty, a super-annuated, worn-out man.⁸ His death occurred at Rutland July 28, 1844, at the age of 88.

The following people who possibly died of the epidemic of 1813 at Rutland or are buried in Rutland are listed below. Probate records, East and West Parish church records, cemetery inscriptions and *Rutland Herald* issues have been searched to compile this list. It is interesting to note that only a third of the 60 or more names have gravestones. An asterisk beside the name indicates the grave is marked.

*Barr, William, died April 4, 1813, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. In 1800 he deeded part of his farm to the East Parish for a burying ground⁹ (the North Main Street Cemetery where he is buried). He was a Revolutionary War soldier and a deacon of the church which at that time was located just south of the cemetery. His probate record indicates that he owed Dr. Ezekiel Porter \$5.50 for his last illness.

Bateman, Almon, is listed under February in the West Parish church records.

Bissell, John, is listed in the East Parish records as dying March 20, 1813, aged 66.

Blanchard, an infant of Capt. T., died January, 1813, in the West Parish.

Bowen, Mrs. Olive, died January 24, 1813, in the West Parish.

Cade, John, a soldier, died March 30, 1813, aged 22, in the East Parish.

Chapin, Mrs. Joel, died February 13, 1813, aged 29, in the West Parish.

Chatterton, Susanna Lecetta, twin daughter of Exi, died February 3, 1813, aged one year, in the West Parish.

*Cheney, Benjamin, died March 31, 1813, aged 88. He was a Revolutionary War soldier and is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

*Cheney, Sally, daughter of Capt. Benjamin and Sally, died March 29, 1813, aged six. She is buried at North Main Street Cemetery.

Cook, old Mrs., died March 27, 1813, in the West Parish.

*Cornish, Benjamin 1st, died February 15, 1813, aged 68. He was a Revolutionary War soldier and is buried in Whipple Hollow Cemetery.

Cotton, child of Michael, died March 10, 1813, aged two, in the East Parish.

Cushman, son of Mr., died April 8, 1813, aged one year, in the East Parish.

*Fairfield, Nathaniel, died January 6, 1813, aged 82. He is buried in Whipple Hollow Cemetery.

*Fay, Deborah, died March 7, 1813, on a visit to Middletown, aged 33 or 35. Her brother William Fay was the editor of the *Rutland Herald* and wrote that she left Rutland on Saturday the 27th, came down with the illness on Monday and died Saturday.¹⁰ She is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

*Finten, Matthew, died January 24, 1813, aged 58. He was a Revolutionary War soldier and died in the East Parish.

*Finten, Hannah, wife of Matthew, died January 24, 1813, aged 52. Both she and her husband are buried in North Main Street Cemetery. Their obituary states, "Both were seized about the same time, with the fatal disorder of which they died on the Monday previous."¹¹ He died Sunday at 10 a.m. and she at 8 p.m. the same day.

*Ford, Rosella Eliza, daughter of Amasa and Gilly died January 1, 1813, aged six months and three days. She is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

Freeman, old Mr., died February 23, 1813 in the West Parish.

*Gillmore, William, died February 28, 1813, aged 42. He is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

*Gould, Henry Jr. died February 5, 1813, aged 22. He is buried in North Main Street Cemetery. Possibly he had a lengthy illness, since his doctors' bills were as follows:

Dr. John Cleveland for last sickness \$6.26.

Dr. Joel Green for last sickness \$23.00.

Dr. David Palmer 2nd for last sickness \$9.00.

William Alvord, a Rutland cabinetmaker, made his coffin for \$12.00, and Ben Dix charged his estate \$2.25 for funeral expenses.

Hagar, Mr., died January 26, 1813, aged 48, in the East Parish.

*Hale, Mercy, daughter of Asa and Dorcas, died April 4, 1813, aged 26. She is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

Harris, Mrs. Sarah, from Shaftsbury died February 5, 1813, in the West Parish.

Hatch, Mason, a traveler from Alstead, New Hampshire, died at Mr. Cheney's in the East Parish March 18, 1813, aged 50.

Hawley, child of Mr., died February 11, 1813, aged eight months. Church records indicate the child is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

*Jackson, Daniel, died at Pittsford January 27, 1813, in the forty-seventh year of his age. He is buried in Whipple Hollow Cemetery.

Jordan, an infant of Jonathan, died January 26, 1813, in the West Parish.

Knight, daughter of Mr., died February 4, 1813, aged six.

Knight, daughter of Mr., died February 7, 1813, aged one and a half.

*Larkin, Widow Damaris, died at Pittsford January 1, 1813, in the eighty-ninth year of her age. She is buried in Whipple Hollow Cemetery.

*Lee, Hannah, wife of Ashbel, died at Pittsford, March 3, 1813, aged 42. She is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

*Lee, Thomas, son of Ashbel and Marey, died at Pittsford, February 27, 1813, aged 14. He is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

Loveland, Prudence, died February 6, 1813, aged five, in the West Parish.

McGregoire, Mr. (the **Rutland Herald** lists him as Daniel McGregor, an aged man)¹² died March 25, 1813, aged 51, in the East Parish.

McGregoire, Mrs., died March 29, 1813, aged 52 in the East Parish.

McConnell, son of William, died March 30, 1813 aged three, in the East Parish.

*Meacham, Lewis, died March 30, 1813, aged 41. He is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

*Mead, Capt. Abner, died February 11 (his gravestone says January 11), 1813, aged 57. He is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

*Merrill/Merritt, Abigail, daughter of Roswell and Elizabeth, died March 28, 1813 in her thirteenth year. She is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

*Miller, Aaron, died February 21, 1813, in his sixty-ninth year. He is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

Miles, Mr., a stranger, died January 20, 1813, aged 56, and was buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

Moses, Mary, died January 15, 1813, aged 18, in the West Parish.

Ormsby, child of Charlotte, died March 14, 1813, aged two, in the East Parish.

Osgood, Widow, died "unknown the day" in January, 1813, in the West Parish.

Owen, Stephen of Johnstown, New York, died April 12, 1813, "after a most painful illness of sixteen days"¹³ of the prevailing epidemic in the East Parish.

*Page, Mrs. Chloe, widow of Col. William, died March 7, 1813, aged 56. She is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

Pettingill, Barnabas, died March 20, 1813, aged 42, in the West Parish.

Pitcher, Capt., died March 28, 1813, aged 55, in the West Parish.

Pitcher, Capt. Ebenezer, died January 1, 1813, "above 90" in the West Parish.

Poor, Mrs. Betsey, died February 3, 1813, in the West Parish.

Poor, Hannah died January 31, 1813, in the West Parish.

Reynolds, Henry or Harry, died March 1, 1813, aged 21, in the East Parish.

Reynolds, wife of Jacob, died February, 1813, in the West Parish.

*Richardson, Johnson Esq., died at Parkerstown (Mendon) March 21, 1813, aged 46. He was a "Representative in the General Assembly of this State, for that town."¹⁴ He is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

Seward, Chloe, died February, 1813, in the West Parish.

Skiff, son of Widow, died February, 1813, aged three, in the East Parish.



Some of the victims of the 1813 epidemic are buried in the Whipple Hollow Cemetery in West Rutland.

*Ward, Calvin, died February 6, 1813, in his twenty-eighth year. He is buried in Pleasant Street Cemetery.

*Wells, Jonathan, died January 17, 1813, aged 50. The *Rutland Herald* wrote that, "He left an estate computed to be worth upwards of one hundred thousand dollars."¹⁵ He is buried in North Main Street Cemetery.

Williams, Sarah, died January 20, 1813, in the West Parish.

After the epidemic the survivors, many bereft of close relatives and friends, began the task of putting their lives back in order. Lonely spouses remarried, children were comforted by a new step-parent, and baby brothers and sisters arrived. Somehow the broken family circles mended, and with time and hard work the emptiness faded. But few remembered the epidemic of 1813 without sadness and longing for a departed loved one.

FOOTNOTES:

¹*Rutland Herald* February 17, 1813

²*Ibid.*, October 28, 1823

³*Ibid.*, August 10, 1824

⁴*Rutland Land Records* Volume 10, page 100

⁵*Rutland Herald* November 10, 1835

⁶*Ibid.*, April 7, 1838

⁷*Rutland Land Records* Volume 12, page 482

⁸*Rutland Herald* September 5, 1844

⁹*Rutland Land Records* Volume 7, page 104

¹⁰*Rutland Herald* March 10, 1813

¹¹*Ibid.*, January 27, 1813

¹²*Ibid.*, March 31, 1813

¹³*Ibid.*, April 21, 1813

¹⁴*Ibid.*, March 24, 1813

¹⁵*Ibid.*, January 20, 1813

About the Author:

Dawn Hance, whose ancestors settled in Rutland County 200 years ago, maintains an active interest in the historical background of this area. In 1976 to commemorate the bicentennial she co-authored a book on Pittsfield, Vermont, *A Glimpse of the Past*. Four years later she wrote *Shrewsbury, Vermont: Our Town As It Was*. At present she is gaining more knowledge about early Rutland and its families through the *Rutland Herald* and town records. This research led to the contribution of the foregoing article.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The Rutland Historical Society was founded in 1969 to preserve, study and disseminate the history of the original Town of Rutland as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1761, now comprised of the City of Rutland (1892) and the Towns of Rutland (1761), Proctor (1886) and West Rutland (1886). The Society maintains and operates The Rutland Museum in the historic Bank of Rutland building built in 1825, now owned by the City of Rutland, and The Vermont Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Vermont State Fair. A research library and the historical collections are maintained in the Museums and the historic Nickwackett Fire Station. Gifts or bequests of articles of historical interest or money are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

The Society publishes the Rutland Historical Society Quarterly for the members and presents public historical programs throughout the year at the Rutland Free Library in the Nella Grimm Fox Room.

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